

## Have clear rules and systems for identifying and remedying contractor problems

Even with the best contractor partners, a program may sometimes encounter difficulties that require remediation. Consistent with Home Performance with ENERGY STAR program principles, many Better Buildings Neighborhood Program partners discovered that they could address these difficulties by establishing contractor requirements to set standards for quality work, a transparent remediation process, and measures for dismissing underperforming contractors. They found that the key is to make contractor requirements clear from the beginning of your program. Contractor participation agreements and codes of conduct for interactions with customers can help ensure understanding of standards and provide a rule of thumb for when issues needed to be addressed. Not all contractors are equally skilled or customer-service oriented. These programs learned that, in order to preserve their reputation, they needed to be able to confidently recommend any contractor on their list. It is important to apply corrective actions as needed in response to problems and deficiencies, as well as a procedure to respond to serious or recurring problems such as probation or dismissal from the program. By setting the bar high and dismissing contractors that failed to meet program requirements, these programs helped ensure consistent, quality customer service.

- [Efficiency Maine](#) [1] developed a [Contractor Code of Conduct](#) [2] that contractors sign, stating that they will respect the homeowner's property, minimize disruption to the homeowner, and leave the home in as good or better condition as it was found. It lists 15 things that contractors will and will not do relating to communications, onsite behavior, and work practices. To assure quality in the program, a minimum of 15% of upgrade projects are subject to random and/or targeted onsite inspections, covering the pre-installation, installation, and post-installation phases. [Efficiency Maine's Program Manual](#) [3] outlines clear procedures that program staff will follow in the event that the inspections reveal errors, omissions, or inconsistencies. The manual also outlines procedures for removing a contractor from the program's registered vendor list for repeated failure to correct deficiencies.
- [Omaha and Lincoln, Nebraska's reEnergize Program](#) [4] furnished its contractors with an Energy Upgrade Contractor Protocol and General Scope of Work, which governs contractor work processes and customer interactions. This protocol was intended to serve as a supplement to contractors' technical training. It provided rules that contractors were required to follow to achieve customer satisfaction throughout the upgrade process and also outlined basic safety requirements. Topics covered everything from how to greet the customer to cleanup steps once the upgrade was completed. The protocol was an important tool for ensuring that all homeowners had a pleasant experience with the program through their interactions with contractors. It helped the program achieve over 1,300 residential energy upgrades over a 3 year period that included program launch.
- The [Southeast Energy Efficiency Alliance](#) [5] Better Buildings Chapel Hill WISE program in North Carolina discovered that even though contractors might have met the required program criteria and had qualifying credentials, the quality of their work and their understanding of building science varied substantially. To address these issues, Chapel Hill engaged an external training partner that worked with contractors on the quality of their work and the implementation of quality control mechanisms to improve future work. The program developed and implemented a contractor probationary and debarment policy and corrective action plan. Under that plan, contractors were subject to a [corrective process](#) [6] that included a preliminary review of concerns, probation, specific requirements to return to the pre-qualified list after probation, and dismissal from the program. This policy helped the program systematically approach the issue of alerting contractors whose work fell short of the program's quality standards, and to dismiss contractors who were unable to improve the quality and consistency of their work.

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**Source URL:** <https://rpssc.energy.gov/tips-for-success/have-clear-rules-and-systems-identifying-and-remedying-contractor-problems>

**Links**

- [1] [http://www1.eere.energy.gov/buildings/betterbuildings/neighborhoods/maine\\_profile.html](http://www1.eere.energy.gov/buildings/betterbuildings/neighborhoods/maine_profile.html)
- [2] <http://www.efficiencymaine.com/docs/EMCode-of-Conduct.pdf>
- [3] <http://www.efficiencymaine.com/docs/HESP-Program-Manual.pdf>
- [4] <http://energy.gov/eere/better-buildings-neighborhood-program/omaha-and-lincoln-nebraska>
- [5] <http://energy.gov/eere/better-buildings-neighborhood-program/seea-southeast-consortium>
- [6] [https://rpsec.energy.gov/sites/default/files/program-materials/c-801\\_ChapelHillWISE\\_ProbationPolicy.pdf](https://rpsec.energy.gov/sites/default/files/program-materials/c-801_ChapelHillWISE_ProbationPolicy.pdf)